

West Slope Watershed

Allen Canyon Creek

The source waters for Allen Canyon Creek are the wetlands and ponds near the Ridgefield exit of Interstate 5. The four-mile creek flows northwest through rolling rural hills and a small, forested canyon. Near its confluence with the Lewis River, the creek passes through Mud Lake. At times, the creek dries up during the late summer months. Mud Lake is very shallow (five to ten feet deep) and is slowly converting to marshland as it fills with sediment.

The Allen Canyon Creek drainage area is approximately 30 percent forest. The remaining area is rural residences, small farmsteads, and commercial development near I-5.

Although there has been no field testing of Allen Canyon Creek, the lack of forestlands, the fairly extensive rural residential development, and the presence of I-5 would indicate the stream health would be poor.

Key management objectives for Allen Canyon Creek

- Limiting degradation from development along I-5
- Reducing individual pollution sources
- Planting streamside trees
- Utilizing residential construction methods that minimize runoff from roofs, driveways, and roads

Gee Creek

Gee Creek originates along Interstate 5 and parallels the freeway for about a mile and a half. After it passes under I-5, Gee Creek flows west through a canyon and the city of Ridgefield. It then passes through a series of lakes and ponds in the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge and eventually flows into the Columbia River.

Two years of data collected near Ridgefield High School and at Abrams Park show that Gee Creek has poor stream health. Probable sources of this poor health include runoff from agricultural, developed and residential areas, and I-5. Gee Creek has a fairly large number of ponds created by dams in the creek on its tributaries. Because waterfowl and livestock use these ponds, they can be a source of fecal bacteria.

Management objectives for Gee Creek

- Preventing or limiting further degradation due to development
- Finding and removing pollutants such as fecal bacteria that limit recreational use
- Keeping existing forest along streams
- Stormwater regulations for new construction
- Limiting lot sizes to several acres in rural areas
- Streamside tree planting

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Stream Health 2003

Stream Health Ratings	Description	Land Cover Key
Excellent	Pristine, superior, or unsurpassed condition; minimal human disturbance	Forest
Good	Healthy enough to support aquatic life and recreation	Grass/Shrubs
Fair	Degraded but may support aquatic life and recreation	Residential/Recently cleared land
Poor	Inferior health, poorly suited for aquatic life and recreation	Commercial/Industrial
Very Poor	Severely degraded health; unsuitable for aquatic life or recreation	
Unassessed	No data collected	
Probable	Predicted stream health	

Whipple Creek

Whipple Creek begins in hills near Interstate 5 and east of the Clark County Fairgrounds. It flows under the freeway and into a shallow, wooded canyon for about four miles. Below NW 41st Avenue, Whipple Creek flattens out onto a narrow, grassy flood plain. After crossing under the BNSF Railroad line, Whipple Creek discharges to Lake River. Packard Creek, Whipple Creek's only named tributary, flows south into Whipple Creek near the intersection of NW 179th Street and NW 41st Avenue.

The Whipple Creek basin is about 54 percent grass, fields, and shrubs. About 21 percent of the area remains forest, mainly in parkland and canyons. In the east and southeast portion of the basin near I-5 and NE 139th Street, farms are being replaced by rural suburban housing and urban development. Currently about 25 percent of the area is residential, commercial, or public facilities.

The stream health information for Whipple Creek was collected near where the creek crosses NW 41st Avenue. Data show poor to very poor stream health, most likely caused by runoff from urban, rural suburban, and farmed areas. High concentrations of harmful bacteria suggest septic system or sanitary sewer system leaks.

Management objectives for Whipple Creek

- Attempting to find and remove sources of fecal bacteria
- Keeping existing forest along streams
- Applying stormwater regulations to limit harm from new construction
- Limiting lot sizes to several acres in rural areas
- Streamside tree planting